

Lesson Plan: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' Meeting

Connection to POS: Benchmark 4.27: County government shaping public policy

In this lesson, students will make decisions for Fairfax County based on the supervisory districts they represent. It involves independent research and a role-playing activity. It is similar to a lesson in the Virginia/United States Government Program of Studies, but is not specifically budget-focused like that lesson. You will find an extension of this lesson under Benchmark 4.28, which deals with the influence of individuals and groups on County government.



Objectives

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- describe the duties of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
- explain how the Board of Supervisors influences the public agenda in the County



Materials

- copies of Student Handout – Board of Supervisors Meeting Scenarios

or

- Copies of *Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Weekly Agenda*, available online at www.co.fairfax.va.us/gov/bos. For a free subscription, call 324-3185. (Sample included)



Time Needed

- independent research time and a 90-minute class period.

(The length of time for the activity can vary widely depending on the number of scenarios you choose to use.)



Procedures

1. Divide class members into roles for this simulation. Depending on class size, a good arrangement might be to have a pair of students represent each County supervisor. (You will need to “save” some students to represent interest groups and individual citizens in the second part of the activity.)
2. Distribute copies of Student Handout – Board of Supervisors Meeting Scenarios to each pair of students. (At this point, you could use actual copies of the *Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Weekly Agenda* instead of the Student Handout. This will make your lesson more “real,” but you risk having students working with material that they find hard to understand or uninteresting. A sample copy of the *Weekly Agenda* is in this notebook.)
3. Students should research the County supervisor they have been assigned and the district he or she represents outside of class time (or in the computer lab as a class). They should be trying to discover how their supervisor might react to the scenarios on the handout.
4. On the designated class day for the simulation, arrange the room to represent the County Board Room. The Board Chair opens the meeting and presents the scenarios for debate and discussion, one at a time.
5. For each scenario, allow each supervisor to speak on behalf of his or her district for three to five minutes, and then have the Chair call for a vote. Allow for rebuttal or follow-up at your discretion, depending on time and student preparation.
6. After all debate on each proposed amendment, the Chair should call for a vote.



Assessment

- Use an adaptation of the Simulation Activities Rubric in the Virginia/United States Government Program of Studies to grade students on their participation and speaking roles.
- Grades can also be based on students’ research and presentations.



Extensions

- See **Lesson Plan – Interest Group Influence on Board Member Decision Making** under Benchmark 4.28
- Invite a member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to visit your school and speak to the students before, during, or after the simulation.
- Have students attend an actual County Board Meeting and report to the class on what they saw and heard.